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With regard to accomplishments, the chief of these is a competent share of reading, well chosen and properly regulated.

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HAVING, yesterday, taken a review of my several speculations, I was exceedingly surprised to find, that not one of them out of one and twenty had been directly and immediately dedicated to the ladies. I am apt to ascribe this apparent neglect to my extraordinary diffidence; which has never suffered me to imagine myself capable of any performance, that might instruct women of understanding, though I have always been zealous for their improvement in learning and virtue. I am confirmed in this opinion by looking at the shelves in my library. It consists of Ancients and Moderns so equal in point of numbers, that should they ever come to blows, as they once did at *St. James's*, it would most likely be a drawn battle, provided that all of

them stood to their posts : but so many of my Moderns are constantly deserting to my female acquaintance, that the few, who remain in the field, would have to fight the Ancients at considerable odds. In other words, I am very much delighted with recommending a favourite author to the notice of ladies : to be the means of conveying knowledge is at all times a pleasing employment ; but the pleasure is, in this instance, increased tenfold from a consideration of the object.

IN the present age, indeed, a man may reasonably call his modesty in question, who hopes to instruct the more sensible part of the other sex. I am rather inclined to be of opinion, that the wits of the present day do not in their writings very much surpass those of the reign of Queen *Anne* ; and I am pretty well assured that the ladies stand in far less need of instruction than they did at that period, and that my country-women were never so distinguished for good sense, as in the reign of Queen *Charlotte*.

IN speculating, however, on this subject, I have sometimes fancied, that the ladies in the Country are more eminent for their understanding, than those who live in the Metropolis : whereas, that with the men it is, perhaps, the reverse. Supposing this to be the fact, I think it may fairly be accounted for by considering the different structure of the mind in the two sexes, and the different kinds of excellence to

which each of them should lay pretence. In order to form the accomplished gentleman (where I use the word *accomplished* in its true and proper sense) two things seem necessary ; a knowledge of the world, and a knowledge of books. Neither of these can be so fully attained in the Country as in great cities, where libraries are open for the use of the public, and where the curious may be introduced into company of every description. I am far from wishing to make such an invidious distinction between the male and female mind, as to affirm that a woman may not become accomplished by the same means as a man ; yet I think, that these means should be used in a different degree, and should be somewhat differently applied. It will not, I hope, be interpreted into a degradation of the ladies, to say that deep philosophical researches and universal learning contribute little, if any thing at all, to the ornament of their sex, or that active life is not the sphere, which they are principally expected to fill : tho' it must be allowed that women should not be totally without learning, or wholly unacquainted with the manners of the world. As much, however, of these, as is conducive to their real improvement, may be acquired by such, as reside in the Country. We have not, indeed, a great variety of books ; but if the few, which are to be met with among us, be only well selected, they will contribute more largely to the stock of female intelligence, than a multitude of volumes, which distract the at-

tention. An acquaintance with the world, if gaiety and dissipation be not included under that head, may likewise be acquired in a sufficient degree in the present improved state of Country manners. Our entertainments are not less rational or our mirth less refined, than that which is to be met with in the larger circles of the Metropolis. Nor indeed can it be otherwise: as the more sensible part among the people of condition in *London* annually seek refuge from the noise and tumult of the Town in the stillness of the Country, and communicate to us all the knowledge and improvements of the Capital without any of its levity or folly. I do not, in this place, take notice of those coxcombs, who sometimes come down into the Country to excite our wonder, as with most of us they are objects of ridicule rather than of imitation.

FEW, however, of our ladies are condemned to perpetual rustication, but most of them, at certain intervals, pay a visit to *London*. The advantages they derive from these excursions are almost inconceivable. I know of nothing more entertaining or instructive, than the letters of a sensible woman written during her first visit to the Metropolis. I have seen some of these, abounding with very ingenious remarks on life and manners, collected in six weeks, which even the same lady, had she always lived in Town, would not have hit upon in the same number of years. Constant opportunity gene-

rally begets indifference : whereas we are forcibly struck with the novelty of scenes, which open upon us all at once, yet promise but a short continuance.

HITHERTO I have principally considered the negative side of the question ; from which, I think, it plainly appears, that our Country ladies enjoy at least as great means of improvement, as those who live in Town. But I am further of opinion, that if we enquire into the real excellence of the female understanding, the advantage will be found to be in favour of the former. The knowledge of a sensible and amiable woman is made up of such ideas, as are more easily acquired in the Country than elsewhere. It discovers a more thorough acquaintance with the works of nature than of art : and the whole is marked with ease and elegance, softness and simplicity. Accordingly, we are seldom delighted with that masculine sense in women, which seems to set the learning of the other sex at defiance. Such are regarded as a kind of *Amazons* in understanding ; who may sometimes strike terror into men, but cannot incite them to tenderness, and who may happen to fill us with admiration, but never with love. These remarks are grounded on the supposition, that Nature designed a certain amiableness to be the general character of the female mind ; a supposition, which will not be controverted by those, who admit the analogy between the mind and the person. I am inclined, therefore, to believe, that half an hour

devoted to a walk in the fields will often contribute full as much to the improvement of the fair sex, as the same portion of time employed over a book, and that topics of instruction present themselves in a garden no less frequently than in a library. There is something in the contemplation of the works of Nature, which, while it expands the mind, softens and refines it, which lulls to sleep the turbulent affections, and diffuses thro' the breast mildness and serenity.

I AM, however, the last person in the world, who would urge a single syllable against that passion for reading, which prevails among some of the ladies of the present day. An acquaintance with the best writers in our language is certainly one of the most useful accomplishments, which a woman can possess. It assists her exceedingly in conversation by extending her knowledge and chastening her wit. For this reason I have often wondered, that among all the methods of recommending the seminaries of female education, I never have read an advertisement of a school, where young ladies might be accommodated with a well chosen *English Library*. Such information would, surely, be as agreeable to judicious parents, as to be told that the Dancing-Master attended three times a week, or that the Teacher of French resided in the house. This accommodation might tend greatly to fix the taste of women during the whole of their lives, or at least, to make it far more

correct, than it sometimes is at present. Were I to suppose so many of them to be born with a propensity to nonsense, I might, with good reason, be suspected of satire (a talent, that I never indulge); I would, therefore, attribute the avidity, with which some of them devour novels and other trash, to the want of good books, which they laboured under at school: as those, who in their early days have been accustomed to coarse fare, are never afterwards very remarkable for a discriminating palate.

For my own part, I never examine the female character critically, without reflecting, what figure a woman will make in domestic life. I hold the circle of the fire-side to be the trajectory, in which she should move. It is not necessary, that she should always be equally near to the attracting body, any more than that the earth should constantly revolve at the same distance from the sun: but when I see her perpetually rambling after pleasure and dissipation, I consider her as being drawn out of her orbit by some disturbing force, which has thrown the whole system into disorder and confusion. Now supposing this illustration to be just, I cannot help imagining the Country to be the great nursery of female excellence. Retirement and tranquillity have a wonderful effect in attaching the mind to its proper object; as noise and dissipation make it unstable and uncertain. They allow time for reflection and the acquisition of knowledge, without some

portion of which no woman should chuse for her husband a man of a cultivated understanding. The society, too, in the Country, is more likely to fit a lady for domestic life, than that in populous towns : it is marked with hospitality rather than with parade, and even yet retains more of primitive plainness and simplicity, than the tumultuous assemblies of fashionable life.

AMANDA, who is one of the most agreeable women, with whom I have ever conversed, has constantly resided a hundred miles from Town, and has seen the Metropolis but twice. Her character is that of meekness and unaffected worth. Tho' her chief attention is given to her family, she finds leisure to improve her understanding and taste. Her reading has not been extensive, but has been admirably directed. *Addison* appears to be her favorite Author; yet she has a just relish of the beauties of our most pathetic poets, and is remarkably delighted with the pensive spirit of *Bowles*. Her tenderness, however, is without weakness, and tho' she has a fine imagination, she is hardly ever romantic. In her conversation, her good sense makes her the delight of the other sex, but is not so ostentatiously displayed, as to excite the jealousy of her own. In short, whether I consider her as a wife, a parent, or a friend, there is no woman whom I behold with greater veneration than *Amanda*.

R.